JULIUS FUČÍK

and

the Present

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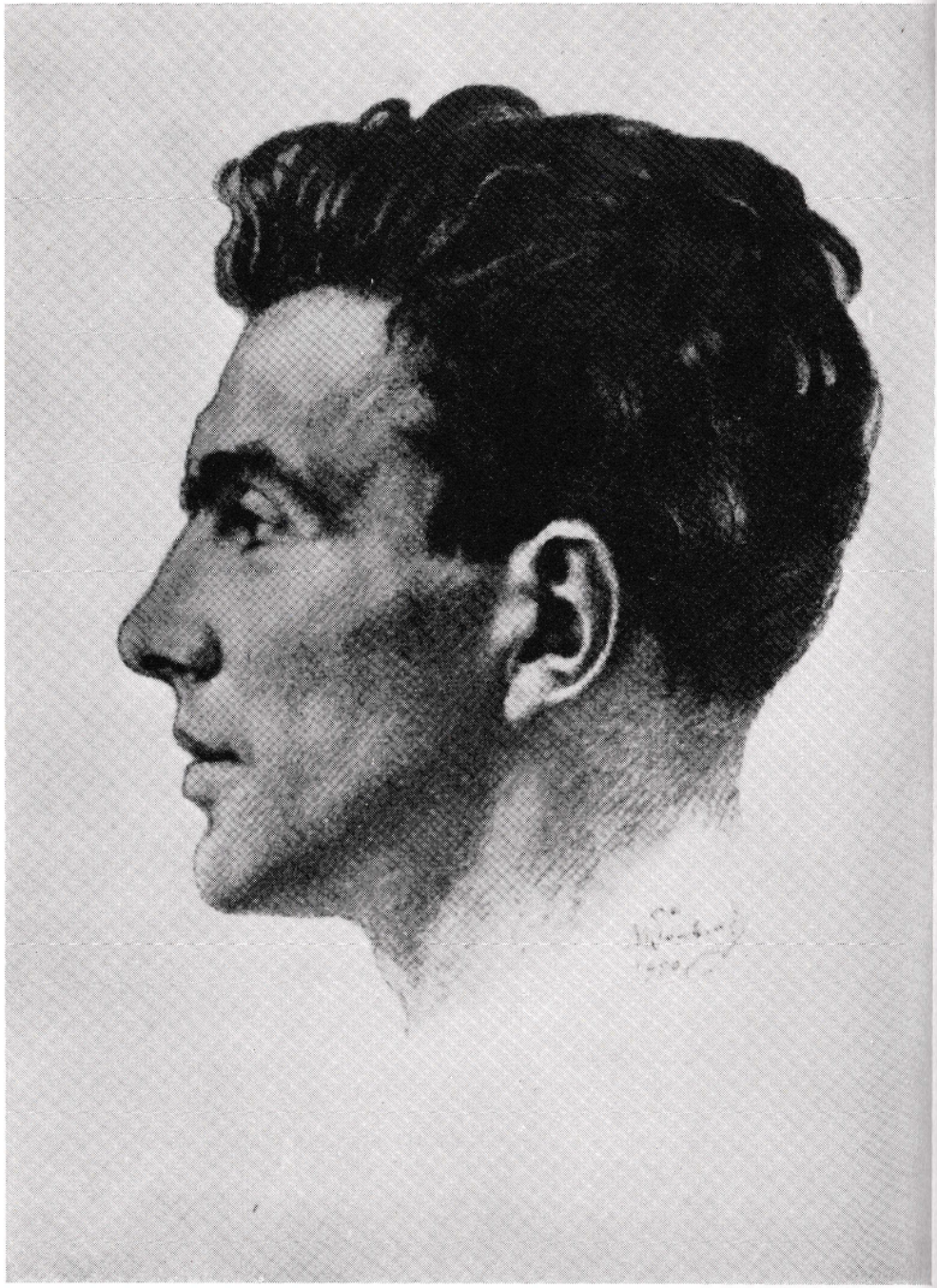

Julius Fučík

AND THE PRESENT

Fučík is not a chance victim of the bestiality of fascism like my great brother Federico García Lorca . . .
Fučík was deliberately chosen as a member of the vanguard destined to bring happiness and peace to mankind . . .

PABLO NERUDA

(From his address delivered at the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw)

The International Organization of Journalists marks the 70th anniversary of the birth and the 30th anniversary of the death of Julius Fučík

People of All Continents Know the Name of Julius Fučík

Jiří Kubka – IOJ Secretary General

Thirty years have passed on September 8. 1973 since Julius Fučík went to his death at the hand of fascist executioners. This is not a long stretch of time in the flow of history but when one considers that during this short period literate people of all continents have come to know the name of Fučík, however they may pronounce it, this is a sign not of something extraordinary but of something general and universal which links the personality and work of Fučík with everyone of us. Time tests the genuineness of words and deeds. And only the message of those survives who had something to say which was not only valid in the past but which is still valid today and will continue to be in the future. The message which Fučík tossed into the sea of time reached those for whom it was meant on the beaches of all continents. Many of Fučík's personal friends and people who are making a profound study of Fučík's work and of his legacy do not find it easy to characterize and comprehend this personality of such wide-ranging interests and outstanding talents that one is persuaded to describe him as "a renaissance man". The Czech writer Josef Rybák in his memoirs draws a telling comparison between Fučík and other world-famous personalities of our literature and notes that the tragic, annihilating Second World War had to mould a new, supremely human type of hero, of a modern man with his eagerness, curiosity, devotion to the new and revolutionary, of a man for whom not even the threat of the darkness of extermination could wipe out the vision of the future world. When we say that in deliberating over Fučík's

personality the term of "renaissance man" immediately comes to mind then we could aptly characterize Fučík also by everything which he was not. He was not a "one-book only" reader whom one must fear, he was not a man of the Middle Ages, he was not a bigot scholastic one-way thinker who seeks in himself the words of his god.

This comparison makes us ponder over the polarity of numerous historical personalities; devotion to an idea can be turned into fanaticism, longing for freedom can be turned into lust for power, love can be easily replaced and seemingly most humane words are usually spread by fire and sword. And Julius Fučík was precisely the protagonist of these sorry heroes. And when Machiavelli says that we possess a barrier of teeth in order to conceal our thoughts, then Julius Fučík used his mouth to speak so loudly that we still listen to him today.

In the modern philosophy of man it is much the same as in mathematics and literature. The result of scores of years of calculations is embodied in a single formula and the result of years of deliberations spouts into a single and simple sentence. In this lies the art of literature and the strength of thought. Fučík once spoke about the question of heroism and said that "that man is a hero who in a decisive moment does what he is supposed to do". How simply put. It shows once again that Fučík was one of us but differed from many by knowing what he has and what he wants to do and by having an adequate dose of vitality and ideas to do so.

Our knowledge has not yet advanced far enough to trace precisely all the characteristics of those personalities which in one way or another express the testimony of their time. We know of course under what conditions Fučík's personality has been shaped. Not yet quite twenty when he took up philosophy, history of art and music at the ancient Charles University in Prague he joined the Marxist Student Association and in the course of his studies became an official of the Communist Party branch. Ever since then he worked in the ranks of the

Party press. It is vitally important to realize, when analyzing the conditions under which Fučík's personality was formed, that he was not a unique phenomenon of the time, that he grew up and lived amidst such devoted fighters as Eduard Urx, Kurt Konrád, Jan Šverma, Václav Sinkule, Křen, Šantroch, Zika and others. And let us not forget that this great and firm front, which began to take shape, gave everyone the sense of collective strength and the national as well as international feeling of the great struggle: this feeling for internationalism, in whatever forms it was expressed, can be traced as an important creative and determining component in the personalities of the time. Let us take the most typical example of the courageous lawyer Ivan Sekanina going to Leipzig where his name becomes firmly linked with that of Georgi Dimitrov. And this internationalism, expressed of course above all in relation to the Soviet Union, is in a moving way characteristic for this generation, which Fučík himself described in his book "The Generation That Came Before Peter" as follows:"We are seeds sown below ground, Peter. That is our generation. That is what we call ourselves. Not all will germinate, not all will grow out of the ground when spring comes. Any one of the hobnailed boots which march above my head could stamp us out. It could crush us – by chance or from malice, or for the pleasure of destruction – we know this. And we live with this knowledge.

"But don't think that we are afraid of this, Peter. Not all of us will grow up, nor will all of us perish. And we know this and live with this knowledge. The rustling of the mature clusters will cover the trampled graves, they will be forgotten, everything will be forgotten, the anxiety and the grief – only the harvest will tell your generation for us, the living and the dead: Take and eat, for this is my body." No bragging, no blind courage, no gallant risk and bravado, I only repeat once again Fučík's own words – to carry on what one ought to do. The existence of the first country of workers and peasants, the Soviet Union, contributed in a massive way to this awareness. This is where Fučík drew in full buckets until the very

end the eternal live water of his revolutionary optimism, and this enabled him to tell his hangmen reading out the death sentence: "Your verdict will now be read to me, I know, it means death to a man! My own verdict over you was pronouced long ago. It is written in the blood of all honest people of the world: Death to fascism, death to capitalist slavery, life to Man, the future to Communism!" With these words the Red Army advanced to Berlin, that Red Army of which he liked to say that it was born on the same day as he, on February 23, although a few years later.

We therefore know certain basic components: the influence of his family, the environment, his studies, living conditions, the historical period and the militant friends he chose as well as the outstanding level of the progressive art and literature in the threatened Czechoslovakia of his day, which in the defence of its rights seemed to encourage the brightest and most patriotic talents to stand on the side of progress. And then Communism and the Soviet Union, and when one thought of Communism one spoke of the Soviet Union, and when one spoke of the Soviet Union one thought of Communism to use Mayakovski's parallel. There was a tremendous force in this which was capable of sacrificing yesterday and the present for future life. It was a remarkable inclination, typical for people with clear and level-headed thinking – an inclination for the future. How many unique mottoes and ideas could Fučík pronounce about the future. Also characteristic was his liking for Jules Verne because of the enthusiasm with which he thought of the future, but also equally his curious friendship and familiarity with the work of Jan Neruda not only as poet but as a simple man whom Fučík discovered in him, and as a champion of his native language and a friendly soul looking into the future. And it is no accident that one can apply to Fučík Neruda's words "whatever he had been he enjoyed being" with the modesty and pride of a Communist. We have already mentioned that at the time when Czechoslovakia found itself among the millstones of world policy highly

significant political and artistic movements came into being in this country. The so-called Czech avant-guarde in the thirties probably reached out furthest in its Marxist creative activity compared with all similar movements in other capitalist countries. It is remarkable to note from where the prominent thinkers of this avant-guarde to which Julius Fučík belonged drew their inspiration. It was on the one hand the history of our nation, particularly the revolutionary and national revival eras, and on the other, not in contradiction but in harmony with the former, proletarian internationalism and particularly the attitude towards the Soviet Union. Fučík's attitude towards the Soviet Union became decisive for his writing and other activity; it is not only expressed in his bold reports from the Soviet Union but profoundly influences his entire literary critical work. The nation which was told that it faced no other future than expulsion from its own country had to be reminded of the glorious past when it surmounted all crises and sufferings; Fučík showed it the future which in that great country with a familiar language was already being translated into reality. Academician Ladislav Štoll expressed a highly instructive idea about Fučík's personality. In the fateful years of his nation Julius Fučík was fascinated by the Czech national revival literature and immersed himself into the renascence atmosphere with the fervour of a refreshing spiritual bath. It was there that he met figures so close to his heart. This is how Ladislav Štoll puts it: "Fučík was charmed by these beautiful human beings. He was particularly thrilled by their sense of democracy, their all-pervading faith in the people, in the independent future of their own nation; he was struck by the assurance with which they based their faith on simple Czech craftsmen, small tradesmen and oppressed peasants among whom they moved with books of verses and pictures from the history of the nation, thus rousing their political consciousness of Czech national and Slavonic entity.

"This is what moved so powerfully that modern scientific Socialist and convinced Marxist Julius Fučík. In any case, did

not Julius Fučík do in the first half of the twentieth century, in the twenties and thirties, something very similar? He also used to travel from town to town, from village to village, he undertook countless lectures after his trips to the Soviet land, he fervently gave accounts and addressed assemblies of workers and peasants on the new socialist ideas of genuine humanity, on life in the country of the October Revolution . . ."

A quite logical, unforced and unconstructed analogy of the time when the nation was to have lost its tongue to the time when the Nazis wanted to tear out its tongue. And under different circumstances and different class and social conditions a profound inner human similarity to the spirit of that time. Although undoubtedly Fučík's thoughts came from national sources but were already formulated in a convincingly class, revolutionary and internationalist way, the thirties meant a new era of our national history, the first genuinely internationalist chapter. Withoul real internationalism our national history would sooner or later have come to an end. And Fučík already then very clairvoyantly saw that the sole possibility of true national development lay in social liberation as well. A true renascence, therefore, which imbued Fučík's whole work.

And since great artists have the gift to feel and live other people's lives this radiant human beauty was reflected in the painting of the Grand Old Man of Czech art, Max Švabinský. It is probably one of the most remarkable paintings which I have seen since the time of the full-blooded portraits of renaissance painters. It is not at all the face of a martyr to which the fateful period might have inspired the artist. It is not at all the face of an ascetic, it is not the face of a preacher nor the face of an avenger. The painter seems to have succeeded by fine contours of expression in reflecting and recording the whole life of the man.

This may be my personal feeling but if we, who did not personally know Fučík, want to understand him emotionally, too, and at the same time understand why Julius Fučík loved so much true art which lives with the people and penetrates

into their hearts, then we must from time to time pause in our daily routine and look at this painting by Max Švabinský.

Thanks to these honest and erudite and convinced interpreters Fučík has never become and will not become a legend. Fučík and his work are certainly not suitable for any "apotheosis" because he was one of them, one of us, and most preciously and joyously one of those who with their vitality, song and optimism filled the streets of Berlin, the capital city of the German Democratic Republic, several months ago. Until the early hours of the morning young people were discussing the future of the world at the newly built-up Alexanderplatz where no trace was allowed to be left of the Gestapo headquarters where our fathers used to be grilled. The Czechoslovak youth delegation informed the world gathering that a Fučík statue would be built in Berlin. Yes, in Berlin, the capital city of the German Democratic Republic. These words sound beautifully. And I believe that to those yaung people who one day will pass this statue Fučík's face will be all the closer, the more distant the horrors against which he had fought.

For all these reasons Fučík's work and example is the most precious legacy to the International Organization of Journalists. Within a very short time after the end of the Second World War Fučík's name became known throughout the world even in the most distant countries of Asia and Latin America and so did fascism in its true substance through Fučík's ideas and words. It is typical that his words made the greatest impact on those countries which experienced or still experience the worst suffering of war or oppression. In the Soviet Union, where Fučík always felt at home, his work has been translated into almost all languages of the numerous nations of the Soviet land. I saw Fučík's picture among freedom fighters in Korea and in Vietnam the first edition of his "Report" was printed in instalments by cyclostyle and distributed to the units in the field.

The International Organization of Journalists quite naturally

placed Fučík's name on its insignia. Fučík's work not only exposes fascism and demonstrates devotion to progress and faith in the future but its artistic interpretation of the dramatic history of the period comprehensibly explains how fascism took its roots and how this poisonous growth spread. Fascism is not only of the brown and black kind with its symbol of the swastika but the deadly cells of fascism become virulent wherever progress and historical development is being prevented by the exploiting colonial order. The operations of the American air force over Vietnam equalled in barbarity the former fascist Luftwaffe. The murder of the outstanding fighter of the national liberation movement, our friend Amilcar Cabral, is characteristic for those methods of work which fascism had used to pave its way before the last war by assassinating Titulescu, Alexander, Barthou, Formis and hundreds of others who had seen through it and wanted to resist it. The European nations remember with profound regret the burnt down towns and their murdered inhabitants during the Second World War; let history know that this barbarity has not yet come to an end. Although My Lai and Wiriyamu are separated by tens of meridians they are an expression of the same barbarity of defeated imperialism against which we must constantly rouse all honest and peace-loving people.

In contrast to many chauvinistically-minded politicians and journalists Fučík on numberless occasions used to patiently explain the class and social substance of chauvinism, nationalism and fascist nationalistic chauvinism. There is no nation with a natural inclination to murder and another with the nature of a dove. All this depends exclusively on prevailing socio-economic and historical conditions. And this clear-cut thesis of Fučík is more than confirmed in the overtly fascist-oriented activity of Israeli ruling circles. One of the most persecuted victims of fascism turns itself into an usurper, an assassin and a torturer. The cause, therefore, lies not in nationality or religion but in the class substance, and this is best proved by the contradictory transformation of the victim

into the oppressor. How many other ideas can be presented from the, alas, uncompleted Fučík's work which were proved true by later developments.

And the verdict which he had pronounced over his own executioners thirty years ago at Plötzensee was carried out.

Therein lies the topicality of his work which not only speaks of the past but also addresses itsef to the present and the future. This is a tremendous help which our international organization fully appreciates. Fučík's name has become the identification sign and communication symbol of all progressive journalists the world over.

In recognition of this fact the Fourth Congress of the International Organization of Journalists meeting in Bucharest in 1958 decided to proclaim September 8 – the anniversary of Fučík's death – as the Day of International Solidarity of Journalists. His name is thus linked with the sense of belonging together felt by all journalists of the world who are fighting for progress, peace and mutual understanding among nations. The struggle for which Julius Fučík called has not come to an end with the defeat of fascism. It is being waged in the most diverse forms and development stages at all paralells and meridians and constantly demands of all journalists determination, courage, selflessness, deep conviction, true writing skill and, frequently, personal sacrifices, including the most extreme material and personal ones. I should add, of course, that progressive journalists in capitalist countries are not endowed with material riches and live much in the same way as Julius Fučík used to live on the staff of "Rudé právo", described very aptly by Josef Rybák in his recently published book. Since 1958, for the past fifteen years therefore, all unions, organizations and groups of progressive democratic journalists associated in our organization have been recalling Fučík's heroic death. The number of these affiliated organizations has this year reached 64. For the 150,000 members of our organization and thousands of their journalistic friends this, however, is not only a day of remembrance but a day

reminding them of their great responsibility as progressive and democratic journalists.

In the same year of 1958 International Press Prizes were inaugurated and awarded since then to the most outstanding progressive journalists of the world. The list of prize-holders over those fifteen years is a very remarkable and striking illustration and reflection of fifteen years of post-war development. And proof that journalists are not only the formulators and spokesmen of progress, frontline soldiers as our Cuban friends would say, but also the first to feel the blows of the ruthless enemy. Apart from the brilliant prize-winning journalists from the U.S.S.R., the Polish People's Republic, the United States, France, the Socialist Republic of Rumania, the German Democratic Republic, Mexico, the Hungarian People's Republic and a number of other countries there are many others for whom not only the ideological struggle but also the war, constant personal risk and sacrifice have never ended. Among our colleagues who received these distinctions were Monika Warneska from Poland and Madeleine Riffaud from France who devoted their brilliant journalistic work to the struggle of the Vietnamese people and were with this people and its journalists in the most difficult hours. Among the International Press Prize winners are journalists persecuted by the ruling circles in their own countries – Greece, Brazil, South Korea and the Saigon regime. But most moving of all and yet another proof that the struggle for progress still demands the highest sacrifices of journalists are those who laid down their lives for their progressive views. And in a way, although they lived in various corners of the world and under different historical conditions, there is in their lives a certain analogy and a certain spiritual affinity with the personality of Julius Fučík whose work they all knew well. Most of them, with a similarly optimistic outlook, moved among simple and honest people of their countries and inspired them with the pride of patriotism and the spirit of revolt. And the highest sacrifices were brought in those countries where the pressure of national and social libe-

ration was strongest and suppression therefore most cruel. The editor of the frontline paper "The Banner of Liberation", our colleague Vu Tung, holder in memoriam of the International Press Prize of the IOJ, was killed in action near Saigon. The IOJ paper published the names of scores of Vietnamese journalists from the South as well as from the North who laid down their lives in the struggle against imperialism. Korean policemen tortured to death the journalist Kim Jong Tae, holder of the 1966 International Press Prize. No less perilous is, however, the work of the progressive journalist in those continents where the heaviest imperialist bomber aircraft do not fly and where instead their murderous gangs and agents operate in the most devious ways. Mrs. Gama Pinto accepted the posthumous International Press Prize at the meeting of our Presidium in Santiago on behalf of her husband, the courageous African journalist who was shot dead in front of his own home for his patriotic journalistic work undertaken on behalf of the liberation of all Africa. Another holder of the IOJ International Press Prize, Kofi Batsa, the General Secretary of the Pan-African Journalist Union and Editor of the magazine "Spark", was imprisoned for 16 months and was only released quite recently. Brian Percy Bunting from South Africa, another holder of the International IOJ Prize who devoted his journalistic work to the struggle for the rights of the African nations, was so consistently persecuted that he can no longer live in his country. His associate, who also received the International Press Prize, Govan Mbeki, received a life sentence and despite all our efforts to secure his release has been kept in the infamous jail on Robben Island together with a number of other national liberation heroes. National as well as international democratic organizations are at present launching a world-wide action for the release of these courageous people who have been imprisoned for over ten years. We pay homage to a number of holders of the International Press Prize in memoriam who had been waging a heroic and difficult struggle

for the liberation of the vast Latin American continent from all oppression.

Reporters and journalists on the staff of the Santo Domingo radio station who despite heavy artillery fire did not cease broadcasting and calling for a continued fight against the American occupants and their local henchmen received the Prize of the International Organization of Journalists in 1965. The outstanding journalist Jorge Ricardo Masetti was killed in action when resisting his murderers in Argentina. The outstanding Chilean journalist Elmo Catalán Avilés was killed in action while fighting with the liberation army of Bolivia. The young Argentinian widow Casiana Ahumada accepted the Prize of the International Organization of Journalists on behalf of her husband Juan G. Elorrio, the revolutionary journalist, who was killed in a so-called car accident in the centre of Buenos Aires while being taken from the police prison to an unknown destination. After her return to Argentina this young woman continued to publish the magazine founded by her young husband and, together with other journalists, was also sent to jail. Recently the Brazilian holder of the Press Prize for 1964, Antonio Mesplé, spent some time in prison. Every name suggests a life story suitable for Fučík's pen. Such as for instance the story of the Chilean journalist Elmo Catalán Avilés, known later as Ricardo at the time of the partisan struggles in Bolivia. He was born in northern Chile and worked as a peon in the saltpetre mines which were owned by the North Americans. He began to write for newspapers, however, became a trade union official, published a working-class paper called "Proletarian Unity", organized the struggle of the proletariat and also wrote books like "The Crossroad of Copper", "The Iron of Chile" and others. This man, who did not waste a second of his life, was killed in action at the age of 38 alongside the fighting partisans in Bolivia. And his last sentence which he wrote was: "Though dead, free man lives on".

In recent years the International Press Prizes of the IOJ are

being gained by journalistic personalities under less tragic and more encouraging circumstances. We have recently handed over the IOJ Prize to the Finnish journalist Unto Miettinen for his extensive journalistic work in the cause of better understanding and cooperation among European nations. This is a reflection of the substantially improved situation on the European continent where the peace offensive of the socialist countries, headed by the Soviet Union and supported by all democratic forces in the West, is achieving unprecedented successes in the history of Europe.

This serious reflection on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Julius Fučík's birth has shown the tremendous and invaluable service rendered by Julius Fučík through his work and example to all progressive and democratic journalists. What Julius Fučík did for us, democratic journalists, is of world-wide significance. It is now for us to contribute our modest share to the fulfilment of his legacy.

Address delivered at the Julius Fučík Memorial Meeting in Prague in September 1973 to mark the 30th anniversary of the death of this national hero.

Julius Fučík and Cuba

Modesto Gonzales, Cuba

We pay homage to Julius Fučík and express our profound admiration for him, for his work and for everything he stands for as a militant Communist, as an anti-fascist fighter and as an internationalist. In the light of his example we must at all times bear in mind our enduring and unshakable obligation of journalists-revolutionaries. An analysis of the life and work of Julius Fučík induces people to analyse their own lives, tasks, their obligations towards themselves and towards mankind.

This stimulates our thoughts which have the penetrating ability to open through shadows the path to light. We are convinced that Julius Fučík was a happy man, because he sacrificed his life for his Czechoslovak homeland.

In Cuba Fučík's work is being studied methodically. His example has been a source of inspiration to our youth. His writings must be read by the whole world because they are expressed in an international language. The essence of contemporary history in made up of the examples which Julius Fučík gave to the world.

It is most important for us to propagate the works and life of Julius Fučík, so rich in ideas and exemplary deeds, so fully devoted to the socialist struggles of his time, to the protection of the working people and of the revolution. The Cuban Ministry of Education published the collected works of Julius Fučík together with biographical notes and excerpts from his Report from the Gallows, so that its spirit would help the reader to understand the man and his work.

He wrote his Report in the prison cell in which he was kept by the fascists. He was murdered by Hitler's hangmen who did not realize that the silencing of this man could not stop his ideas and example to spread the world over. Thirty years after Fučík's death his Report from the Gallows serves as essential literature and is an irreplaceable companion for the revolutionary journalists of the world.

Because the Report from the Gallows is something more than a piece of reportorial work. "Writing – José Martí used to say – is not a matter of chance which flows easily from the pen but an art which requires simultaneously the hammer of the smith and the fine pincette of a watchmaker." Fučík wrote his Report both with the hammer and the pincette. It is an historical document, quite exceptional, written by an imprisoned giant who could never be defeated. Only someone possessing the human qualities which he had could write to his wife from the famous prison cell No. 267: "I have loved life and took up the fight because of its beauty. People, I have loved you. Let grief never be linked to my name. This last will is meant for you, my parents, my Mother and sisters. For you, my Gusta, and for you, comrades, for all of you whom I have loved. It would be wrong and unjust to place on my grave the angel of grief."

Fučík predicted the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Hitler's armies and because he understood which path to take up he joined the ranks of underground fighters and actively participated in the reorganization of the Party's Central Commitee whose members had for the most part been imprisoned. Julius Fučík was a tireless fighter who never retreated one step, a fighter of the Czechoslovak vanguard against fascism, a man who in the devotion to his people and in the hatred for the Nazi occupant found energy for his tireless activity. Julius Fučík was a man who believed that a real fighter has no right to rest as long as there is work to be carried out.

And because he was firmly convinced of this he sacrificed his own life.

We in Cuba know the horrors of brutal repression by colonial and pro-imperialist regimes. Our journalists came to know only too well the brutality of the henchmen of tyranny. Thousands of our young people sacrificed themselves for the attainment of a dignified life, for finding a new spirit, a rational sense of human existence. Two journalists from Gramma, Félix Elmuza and Juan Manuel Márguez, fell in the fight against the pro-imperialist tyranny which had seized power in Cuba. Fučík is therefore not alien to us.

The lives of people like Julius Fučík have the power to cause basic changes in the history of nations.

In Cuba the revolution caused profound transformations in all spheres of national life. Our journalism underwent an unprecedented historical transformation. For the first time in a country of our continent the press of the exploiters disappeared and all mass communications media passed without exception into the hands of the people.

We, Latin American journalists, live and work on a continent which seethes with revolution.

We form an inseparable part of this great homeland to which we are tied by bonds of history, culture and blood.

Above the foundations of our common Latin American substance tower such exeptional personalities as Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín and José Martí who were the first to lay the groundwork to the aspirations for a free, great and united Latin America.

It is therefore not a whim of ours when we, Cubans, feel to be citizens of this continent and soldiers of the Latin American revolution.

Our efforts as journalists and revolutionaries aim at building a future of independent and firmly linked Latin American nations which are at present mercilessly exploited by imperialist monopolies.

To Cuba fell the privilege to blaze this trail by its own revolution. But since that start Latin America has entered on a path of irreversible changes.

This period is marked by the revolutionary processes in Chile and Peru, by the endeavour of Panama to gain full sovereignty over its whole territory.

This is also reflected to a growing extent in the revolutionary battles with are daily being waged with weapons and with the strength of the mass movement in the countries oppressed by oligarchies and imperialism.

We are inspired by the example of Major Ernest Che Guevara who in the midst of the heroic struggle for the liberation of America wrote in the Bolivian forests a great reportage in the form of his War Diary.

We are inspired by the immortal example of José Martí, the journalist and fighter for independence, who met his death in the mountains of our country. We are inspired by the heroic example of Vietnamese journalists who transformed the press into a powerful weapon helping to resist and defeat American aggression. The most striking example is comrade Vu Trung, the chairman of the patriotic journalists of South Vietnam, who was killed by imperialist bombs in 1966 while fulfilling his mission as a war correspondent in the frontline.

We are inspired by Julio Antonio Mella and Pablo de la Torriente Brau, by the Venezuelan Fabricio Ojeda, by the Argentinian Jorge Masseti, by the Chilean Elmo Catalan, by the German Tamara Bunk and by all revolutionaries who sacrificed their noble lives in the fight against imperialist oppression and for national liberation.

We are inspired today more than ever before by the example of Julius Fučík, soldier of the pen and of revolutionary action, who under the most difficult conditions on the verge of death wrote the most galvanizing report against fascism.

It is people like him who enable the nations of the world to write their own Report of Life.

Delivered in Prague at the Julius Fučík Symposium in January 1973.

Julius Fučík's Legacy in the German Democratic Republic

Ralf Bachmann, GDR

May I remark on a personal note that I belong to that generation of anti-fascist German journalists whose library after the crushing of fascism contained perhaps a dozen volumes, when for the first time we got hold of Fučík's "Report from the Gallows". The first edition of this unforgettable work was published in what then used to be the Soviet zone of occupation at a time when the material and "intellectual" shambles of Hitler's Reich were piled up on vast heaps and when the word "gallows" in the title was still far more familiar to us then the word "report". In the following months and years of search Julius Fučík served as one of our great examples, as a journalist, as a Communist, as a man. He taught us to write militantly and to carry on the fight by our own writing.

That first edition which was published in our country in a grey paper cover, looking more like a brochure than a book, still occupies, although much read and thumbed, a place of honour in my library. Yet it accompanied me on many of my trips. At Leipzig, for example, we discussed in a circle of students of journalism the question of how to expect joy of life, beauty and optimism in our jurnalistic work at a time when the struggle was still so difficult and when so many had still to sacrifice their lives for our common cause. And we used to quote Fučík's words which are the slogan of our symposium: "We have lived for joy, we joined the struggle for the sake of joy and we shall die for it. Grief should therefore never be linked with our name."

It is therefore almost a matter of course that the name of Julius Fučík is as much alive today among the people of the German Democratic Republic, the first socialist German state, as it used to be after the war. Streets and squares, schools and rest homes bear his name. His legacy is, however, most intensely kept alive among the seventy or so teams and Brigades of Socialist Labour which adopted the name of "Julius Fučík". This is demonstrated by their annual meetings in the Czechoslovak Cultural Centre in Berlin which have become highly informal friendship gatherings. Since most of the work groups are also closely linked with Czechoslovakia by their working efforts it is quite natural that they endeavour to be worthy of Julius Fučík's name by the exemplary fulfilment of production tasks.

It is no exaggeration to say that in the German Democratic Republic all schoolchildren – at any rate in the higher forms – know who Julius Fučík was. His life and work hold a firm place in the curriculum of our schools. The lessons to be drawn from his life and work for the present generation of journalists are, however, most intensively studied by members of the Departments of Journalism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig. This is shown by several diploma theses which the students of the department have written on this subject.

The great interest in Julius Fučík's work not only among this or that particular group but among the entire population of the German Democratic Republic is probably best illustrated by the following figure: the "Report from the Gallows" has already been published in this country in a total of 100,000 copies. The latest edition is being published by the "Volk und Welt" publishing house on the occasion of the 70th birthday anniversary of Julius Fučík. "I have one request: you, who will survive this era, do not forget. Do not forget the good ones and do not forget the bad ones," wrote Julius Fučík. We had Julius Fučík and his hangmen in our mind when we fought for the lives of the Rosenbergs, for the life of the Spanish patriot Julian Grimau, of the American Communist Angela Davis, when we fought for peace in Vietnam.

We also think of him today as we endeavour to establish a peaceful order in Europe. We assert one hundred times our support for peaceful coexistence and peaceful cooperation between countries in the East and in the West. But we say one thousand times No to all attempts to make us forget that imperialists still remain imperialists, to all attempts to persuade us that the murderers of Fučík and Ernst Thälmann have changed into pious sheep, that the state which sheltered them in the past and still protects them today is the best for our peoples, that the time of convergence and ideological coexistence is about to come, the time of the "free exchange of ideas and persons" between the descendants of Thälmann and Fučík and that "free world" where – to change Fučík's words – yesterday is still today.

Imperialism cannot be persuaded to promote peace, only the strength and unity of the socialist community headed by the Soviet Union can constrain it. Fučík's warning "People, I have loved you. Be on your guard!" is as topical as forty years ago.

Delivered in Prague at the Julius Fučík Symposium in January 1973.

Plötzensee

Zdeněk Hoření, ČSSR

Plötzensee. A small booklet, published already for the thirteenth time by the West Berlin Office for Political and Educational Activities, carries the following explanation: "In north-west Berlin, at the boundary of the West Berlin district of Charlottenburg and Wedding lies the Plötzensee prison, used today to house young offenders . . . During the National Socialist regime about 1,800 men, women and youngsters were decapitated here or hanged. Among the victims were Germans, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Czechs and members of other nationalities . . . "

On September 8, 1943 the executioner sent to death a man whose last prophetic words sent from the death cell to the world outside were: "Man is not diminished in his stature even when he is beheaded."

These words came from Julius Fučík.

Year after year on September 8, and not only on this day, people from near and far come here, to the banks of the West Berlin Plötzensee lake, to the prison of the same name with bouquets and wreaths to pay homage to the memory of the hero and of all other heroes who laid down their lives in the relentless international struggle against the most horrible form of world imperialism – German fascism.

This year they came once again. Two coaches brought antifascist fighters from Prague. Many Germans were present. From the German Democratic Republic as well as from West Berlin. Workers and journalists, diplomats and clerks, the old and the young. Germans joined Czechs and Slovaks,

Russians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Rumanians, Poles and Cubans.

The name of Julius Fučík appeared on ribbons of various colours.

In the past, the police used to cut off those ribbons as soon as the wreaths were laid. This year there was no interference. The British military administration, which controls the Plötzensee sector, assured the organizers that everything would proceed smoothly. Officials of the Czechoslovak military mission in West Berlin called a Press conference several days before the anniversary of Fučík's death. It received fair publicity in West Berlin newspapers. Even "Die Welt", the most reactionary of them all, carried at least an 11-line item recording this fact. And people who are well acquainted with local conditions were not surprised although they were reluctant to draw any far-reaching conclusions from it.

Had it not been for the repellent barbed wire drawn across the top of the high walls surrounding the prison compound and had it not been for the muffled sound of some command coming from the invisible depth of the prison courtyard everything might have appeared quite civilian, unobtrusive and unprovocative. At any rate to children.

The memorial grew into the living body of the still functioning prison as a silent enclave. After the war, when the horrors of fascism had also been silenced here, the memorial was enclosed by a wall and the old linden and oak trees were joined by pine trees and different kinds of shrubs. They are now doing their best to lend this place of past horror a semblance of dignified dedication.

The memorial is in fact the execution chamber of yesterday. A small two-part ground level brick hut. In the first half of the hut the Nazis read out the death sentence to the prisoners, behind the partitioning the executioner carried out his infamous job. The axe has long since been removed. Only four bare walls, the wooden ceiling and the iron bar suspended from it with the notorious "butcher's hooks" are all that remain of the death chamber.

The prison priest, Harald Poelchau, who in those terrible days gave the condemned men and women the last solace, recalls that "always eight men used to be called by their names and led away". The booklet also says that the hangmen used to execute simultaneously eight people on eight hooks. A later picture reveals only six hooks. And today only five are left in the execution chamber. Someone might perhaps have taken one to a museum or as a souvenir . . . I do not know. In time only the iron bar might be left in place at Plötzensee.

Nevertheless these "butcher's hooks" belong to history. To a tragic turn of history. One of them was used for the execution of Julius Fučík. No one will ever know which one.

Father Poelchau, whom Gusta Fučíková quotes in her memoirs, says that on September 7, 8 and 9, 1943, at the height of the mass executions the executioner's axe was temporarily disused. Instead the fascists used the "butcher's hooks" which had been left over from the mass execution of the members of the so-called "Rote Kapelle" (Red Band) carried out on December 22, 1942 (Boysen, Harnack, Schulze and other German patriots). It was then that the Nazi "Ministry of Justice" issued an order to prepare measures in the Plötzensee execution chamber "for the simultaneous hanging of eight persons".

The hooks were used for similar mass executions for the second time in September 1943.

As one of the Nazi documents records, Fučík died on September 8, 1943 at 4.55 a. m.

He was neither the first nor the last in that terrible night.

The booklet which I brought home from Plötzensee speaks about a single night of mass executions. They started at 7.30 p. m. on September 7 and ended at 8.30 a. m. on the following morning. During that night a total of 186 people met their death on these hooks. Father Poelchau speaks of three consecutive days and quotes the figure of 360 deaths. "A pile of naked corpses of the victims lay in front of the execution chamber for several days," he recalls. "This is one of the horrifying impressions which I cannot erase from my memory:

the tortured white corpses of people dumped on each other like refuse."

The Office for Political and Educational Activities in West Berlin included a total of 19 photographs in its official booklet on the dark history of Plötzensee. Eighteen of them show German victims from various sections of the anti-Nazi resistance movement, the nineteenth portrays Julius Fučík. It gives in brackets also his last clandestine name – Professor Horák. At another place it mentions a further Czech inmate – Zdeněk Pospíšil. In the haste with which the executioners drove their prisoners to the execution chamber he became the victim of a tragic mistake when the murderers mistook him for another Czech of the same name . . .

Father Poelchau says that on that terrible night the members of the Czech resistance movement made up the largest group among the victims. "The Czechs went to their death unbroken although with a heavy heart," he says in his eye-witness account. "They were tied to life with thousands of bonds, they were sensitive people full of aspirations."

Sensitive people full of aspirations . . . They went to their death unbroken. This is the enduring impression on reading Julius Fučík's last letter, his last written legacy to us and the future. Fučík wrote it on the official prison stationery bearing the Plötzensee address on August 31, 1943. "We are making paper bags, singing to ourselves and waiting for our turn to come," he wrote to his sisters. "Believe me: nothing, nothing at all could take away my joy which is inside me and which comes up every day with some motif from Beethoven . . . And when all is over I ardently wish you not to remember me with sadness but with the same joy with which I have always lived . . . "

On September 8, 1973, the overriding thought among people assembled on the courtyard in front of the execution chamber at Plötzensee was not sad remembrance although the gloom, grief and tragedy of this place can hardly inspire another mood. Two speakers addressed the assembled crowd: a Czechoslovak diplomat and a West Berlin anti-fascist. The question which both expressed independently of each other could be summed up as follows: "Does fascism finally belong to the past?"

At that very moment, in this courtyard facing the wall which was added to the execution chamber after the war, I realized that at Plötzensee they fear that damned word of fascism like the pest. The symbolic wall almost shamefacedly speaks only of the Hitler dictatorship. The inscription literally reads: DEN OPFERN DER HITLERDIKTATUR DER JAHREN 1933 – 1945 (To the Victims of the Hitler Dictatorship 1933 – 1945).

The booklet, which every visitor receives free of charge as a souvenir, also seems to suffer from a similar faulty memory. Yes, it speaks of dictatorship, of the seizure of power, of Hitler, of National Socialists, of tyranny. Not, however, of fascism. I only found one specific mention of it in the 32 pages of the German text: on a photo copy of an anti-fascist leaflet dating from 1936. In 1973, however, this discredited word has obviously gone out of fashion among certain people in West Berlin.

Throughout West Berlin at similar memorial places recalling the infamous era of Hitlerite fascism their designers managed perfectly to evade that uncomfortable word. Only in the Spandau district the local Communists insisted that the war memorial should say clearly and uncompromisingly: TO THE VICTIMS OF FASCISM. But even this solitary exception was removed in 1949 and the Spandau memorial today only remembers "The Victims of Violence".

They would like to gloss over fascism not only as an unpleasant aspect of their history, which after all can be blamed on Hitler, but mainly to evade an answer to the urgent question: who gave rise to fascim?

Plötzensee (West Berlin)

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